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ABSTRACT

The Greenwood School near Minneapolis adapted to their community the Children and the Law program, developed for fifth graders under the auspices of the Minnesota State Bar Association. The program seeks to remove the uncertainty children have about law and make them aware of its function, protecting individual and public rights; provides workshops for teachers and community participants; and emphasizes direct contact between students and policemen, lawyers, and judges. Curriculum materials are flexibly arranged for any classroom application and center on an activity booklet, A Look at Law, which provides familiar situations for student discussion, simulation, and role playing. A television series, Children and the Law, developed by KTCA-St. Paul is also used with the program. Special activities at Greenwood School include use of other films on law related topics such as shoplifting and highway safety; a visit from the country sheriff's mobile crime laboratory; and student presentations to the Village Council requesting the construction of an outdoor swimming pool. Reaction to the program from students and parents has been enthusiastic. (Author/JH)

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CHILDREN AND THE LAW

Society tends to look to the schools for help in solving many of its major problems. For good or ill, this has proven to be a potent force for curriculum change. Driver training, drug education, and Junior ROTC are only a few of the many examples of school programs initiated in response to some recognized need of society. In recent years, many schools have gone beyond traditional efforts in citizenship training to confront a particular social issue of growing proportions--the problem of "law and order." The problem is self-evident; the solutions are not. Across the country schools are trying a variety of approaches. One very promising approach is a program for fifth-graders in Minnesota called Children and the Law.

In 1965, a young clergyman working with the juvenile court in St. Paul became distressed at the youthfulness of offenders summoned before the bench. He recognized the need for a preventive program of legal education to steer pre-teen children away from crime. His early efforts to enlist the cooperation of police, attorneys, and schools in a combined attack on delinquency have grown into the Children and the Law *program, which is now sponsored by the Minnesota State Bar Association. This issue of* Profiles of Promise *examines* Children and the Law, *and especially the experience of one school involved in the program, the Greenwood School in the Wayzata School District, near Minneapolis.*

ARRESTING DELINQUENCY

When the Minnesota State Bar Association assumed sponsorship of *Children and the Law*, it turned to an educational consulting firm, Paul S. Amidon and Associates of Minneapolis, to undertake development of the program. Since the original curriculum materials were field tested in four communities in 1969, the program has undergone considerable revision based on feedback from hundreds of students, teachers, and others involved. But the basic purpose of the program has not changed. As expressed by Isabel Giddings, Executive Vice-President of the consulting firm, the goal is to "arrest juvenile delinquency, rather than waiting to arrest the juvenile delinquent."

PROGRAM GOALS

In order to meet this goal, the program seeks to achieve several instructional objectives:

1. To give boys and girls the experience of meeting personally and asking questions of lawyers, judges, law enforcement officers, and interested citizens.
2. To give fifth-graders the opportunity through such activities as discussion, role playing, art, and writing to express their individual views on law and order in terms of their personal experiences, attitudes, and values.
3. To give fifth-graders varied experiences that will help them make sense of and systematize the world they personally perceive in terms of the procedures used to keep order in the wider community.
4. To enable fifth-graders to explain the citizen's responsibility in making laws.
5. To enable fifth-graders to explain why we have laws.
6. To enable fifth-graders to explain the law enforcement officer's responsibility for enforcing laws.
7. To enable fifth-graders to explain the lawyer's responsibility in interpreting laws.

The program aims to remove much of the mystery and uncertainty that children have about the law and to make them aware of the law as a necessary institution that protects both their personal interests and the interests of society.

GETTING STARTED

With funding from the Minnesota Law Foundation, a two-day workshop has been developed for the program; several workshops have been conducted in different parts of the state. The workshops serve to mobilize community support and train

the teachers and other participants. Although workshop training is not required for teachers to use the program, it is encouraged; and teachers have found the workshops very helpful in providing background, inspiration, and ideas. Training involves familiarization with the program materials, information about available community resources, field trips to law-related agencies and institutions, and basic information about the law and the system of justice.

During the past year the trend has been towards the involvement of whole school districts in *Children and the Law*, rather than just individual schools within a district. A presentation about the program is made to all the elementary school principals in one system. Frequently, the principals then decide to involve all fifth-grade classes in the program.

Children and the Law is an intentionally flexible program with no suggested time limits or schedule. Teachers may decide to set aside a block of time at any point in the year to concentrate fully on the program, or they may decide to incorporate activities from *Children and the Law* into the social studies program throughout the year. The large number of optional activities within the program can be easily supplemented with teacher-designed activities appropriate to the general theme. The program thus becomes somewhat unique in each classroom.

No effort is made in the materials or activities to impose a particular set of values on the children. Rather, the children are encouraged to explore situations familiar to their own age group out of which they will see the reason and necessity for law and recognize their own rights and obligations as citizens in an orderly society. Every effort is made to avoid highly abstract or hypothetical treatment of the subject and to involve the students in realistic activities meaningful at their stage of development.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

One method of accomplishing this is through a series of very brief case studies focusing on problems of law and order and setting the stage for in-class activities and discussions. The case studies are contained in an illustrated pupil activity booklet, entitled *A Look at the Law*. Each child in the program receives a complimentary copy of the booklet, which he is allowed to keep when the program is completed. The children are also encouraged to take the booklet home and discuss it with their parents. The case studies deal primarily with conflict situations that any youngster might run into at home, in peer groups, or in the neighborhood and which may lead to violations of the law. The following episode is one example:

"Try it. You aren't chicken, are you? It's fun. Look at me. I've tried it and I'm all right. Come on. I dare you."

"But I don't want to. What for?"

"Listen, Danny," John said, "Don't be a baby. All your friends have done it. Just sniff a little of this glue. You can be just like the big kids."

After reading this little episode, the children are asked to react to a series of questions related to the case: 1) "How important do you think it is to take a dare? 2) If you were Danny, would you sniff the glue? Why or why not? 3) Glue-sniffing is against the law in many cities. Which is more important--not breaking a law or keeping up with your friends? Why? 4) Why is glue-sniffing harmful?" When all of the students have responded individually in their booklets, the class discusses the issues. Other cases deal with matters such as running away from home, shoplifting, fighting, vandalism, and stealing bicycles and cars. The way children respond to these situations gives teachers insights into students' thinking and their values. Teachers find that the follow-up discussions often become vehicles for getting children to open up about other concerns not directly related to the case at hand.

Another type of activity included in *A Look at the Law* calls for clipping and pasting news items about incidents involving the law and then writing brief reports on how people involved in the case might have felt about what happened. Other lessons require playing the role of a judge to decide cases involving both civil and criminal law or making posters and drawings dealing with specific law-related themes or concepts. In the process of working through all these activities, the children acquire basic understandings about what laws are, how the system of justice operates, the rights and responsibilities of citizens, the distinctions made by the law in the treatment of juvenile and adult offenders, and the roles played by policemen, lawyers, and judges. They also acquire a good working vocabulary related to law and the system of justice.

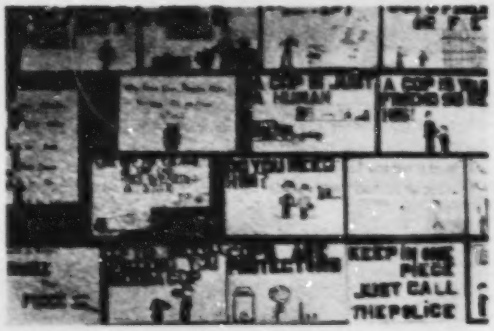
USING COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Other resources, besides *A Look at the Law*, go beyond textbooks to give the children direct contact with what they are studying. A number of law enforcement officers, attorneys, judges, and laymen have volunteered to visit schools and participate in panel discussions, which are an integral part of the program. One of the most popular events is when the two- or three-person panel consisting of a policeman (in uniform), an attorney or judge (in robes), and possibly a layman visit the classroom and spend time talking about their roles and responding to whatever questions the children raise. Panel members are provided with a set of guidelines to prepare them for this experience.

Field trips are another popular activity, involving visits to police headquarters, courtrooms, and detention centers. The teacher's guide for the program lists many other law-related agencies the students can visit. Suggestions for role playing, pantomimes, and games, which can be used in any combination or sequence, are also presented. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate as many kinds of activities as they can, and are discouraged from using the activity booklet without the rest of the program.

A Hennepin County Deputy Sheriff explains how equipment from the Mobile Crime Lab works

Students take a closer look at t
Lab and its equipment



Student posters made in law class

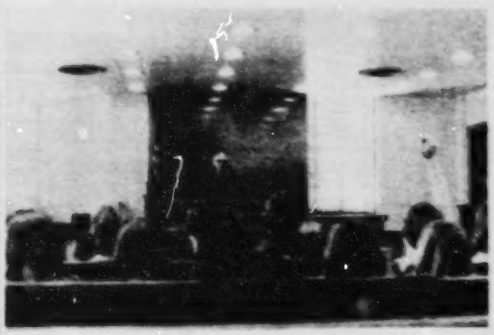
Joan Padrnos presents the swimming pool plan to the Plymouth Village Council while Steve Walton records her speech

Jodie Hunt takes a breath test as part of the tour of the Hennepin County Court House

e Crime

Larry Leventhal, Attorney, and James Willis, Plymouth Village Manager, answer student questions following a panel discussion

The radio dispatcher for the Minneapolis Police Department explains his work to students



Judge William C. Sykora answers questions of children who are visiting Traffic Court

Independently of the project, Minnesota Educational Television has developed a series of six films for *Children and the Law*. These are often incorporated into the program, and are shown by KTCA-TV in St. Paul at designated times during school hours. A limited number of prints of each film is available on loan for use by teachers who cannot adapt their class schedule to the television showings. Each of the six films listed below deals with a specific key concept.

"The Hero Sandwich" - How rules and law had their beginnings.
"The Stranger in Blue" - The role of the policeman in law enforcement.
"Here Come De Judge" - How judges make fair and just decisions.
"Hero Meets An Old Friend" - How the legal process helps the offender as well as protects citizens and their property.
"Hero Gets a Letter" - How laws are changed.
"Free At Last" - The responsibility of citizens in a democratic society.

THE PROGRAM AT GREENWOOD SCHOOL

Greenwood School has been involved in *Children and the Law* for three years and has chosen to present the program in all fifth-grade classes for a three week period in April and May. Like most schools, Greenwood has modified the program to take advantage of the particular resources available in its own community.

In addition to the films described above, a number of other law-related films were acquired, dealing with such things as highway safety, sexual molesters, and how laws are made in Minnesota. The fire chief paid a visit to talk about fire prevention. A representative of the Minneapolis Downtown Council on Shoplifting showed a film, entitled "Caught," and talked with the children about shoplifting. The village manager visited the class, along with police officers and an attorney, to conduct panel discussions. The students also went on a field trip to the Hennepin County Courthouse.

One day, a white van truck with a large star painted on the doors drove up to the school. On the side of the van was printed: "HENNEPIN COUNTY SHERIFF--MOBILE CRIME LABORATORY." A uniformed police officer emerged and brought into the school a variety of mysterious portable cases. The students' full attention was fixed upon the officer as he met with the classes and demonstrated the various items of sophisticated equipment which can be used to make on-site investigations of crimes. After the formal presentation, the children crowded around tables to examine the equipment while the officer was kept busy with a barrage of questions.

The climax of the program for Greenwood School was a visit to a meeting of the Plymouth Village Council to present and defend a proposal for a community swimming pool. The visit was the culmination of days of preparation and was designed to give the students insight into the way laws are made or changed and the role lay citizens can play in the legislative process.

In preparation for the Council meeting, each class discussed issues the children would like to see acted upon by the Council. The classes then suggested and debated about ten or twelve potential proposals. Out of these possibilities, each of the four classes then selected one proposal to be voted on by the entire fifth grade. The proposals were placed on a secret ballot, and the students held an election to select one for actual presentation to the Council.

The four proposals on the ballot were:

1. That it be lawful to shoot bows and arrows, bee-bee guns, and sling shots on your own property or in a designated safe area.
2. That those fireworks which are designated as "safe" be permitted for use in celebrating the July 4th Independence Day Celebration; moreover that they be allowed for use by anyone who is eleven or older; but that children ten and under must be supervised by an adult.
3. That the Village of Plymouth develop a plan to construct an outdoor municipal swimming pool for use by Plymouth residents.
4. That the Village of Plymouth appropriate funds to establish minibike and bicycle trails.

The favorite proposal turned out to be the community swimming pool and the classes immediately went to work to muster their arguments in favor of building the pool. Each class selected its two best speakers--eight in all--to present their case to the Council.

Finally the big night came. The Council, in deference to youth, placed the swimming pool proposal first on its agenda. Supported by a contingent of about 40 students and a number of their parents, the eight spokesmen bravely confronted the Council. An array of impressive arguments were presented. It was pointed out that the pool would create jobs for students as lifeguards, concession stand clerks, and clean-up crews. One councilman indicated that the students might feel differently about the idea a few years later when they became taxpayers. But the students were ready with answers. One of the spokesmen said: "I checked on the cost, and it should only be about $1.00 per resident." Another student pointed out that "swimming lessons could help pay for it, and the sale of candy and pop could pay for the upkeep." Probably the most convincing point was made when one student pointed out: "There's blood-suckers (*sic*) in the lakes."

The Council deliberated and voted. Unfortunately, the proposal was defeated, but the students were informed that an outdoor swimming pool was part of the Council's long range planning. Although the students were disappointed, they appreciated the opportunity to present their case and the responsible way in which the Council responded to their concerns. At the close of the session, one of the children was heard to say, "I still think we're going to win it."

REACTIONS TO CHILDREN AND THE LAW

The success of *Children and the Law* was a significant factor in the decision of the American Bar Association to present an award to the Minnesota Bar Association for the excellence of its efforts in community programs. Like most good programs in which extensive use of community resources is brought to bear by the schools on an issue of public concern, *Children and the Law* has won strong community support. The police, the courts, and other law-related agencies have been most eager to cooperate. As one of its major projects, an association of Minnesota attorneys' wives has undertaken the promotion of the program. With this kind of support the number of communities involved in the program is constantly growing. In 1972-73 there were 51 communities participating, with 10,275 pupils involved.

Almost every school that has become involved in the program has chosen to continue it. The response from hundreds of teachers, parents, and children is overwhelmingly favorable, whether in urban, suburban, or rural communities. One parent of a Greenwood School student wrote: "Great program! We are so lucky to have such great teachers willing to carry on a program of this kind." Another said, "My son was so enthused about *Children and the Law*. Keep up the good work." The following are some reactions by students at Greenwood School, in their own words (and their own spelling), when they were asked about the program:

- "It was a worthwhile program. I learned a lot on how courts run and on what the Village Council does. I wish I could do it again."
- "I learned to respect policemen a lot more."
- "I learned that crime dosn't pay. When you shop lift your steeling from everybody, and it can also heart you."
- "I liked children and the law because now I know what to do to stay out of troble and I know what will happen to me if I get into troble."
- "I enjoyed it and thought it was a very good program. I learned about detention centers, juvenile homes, foster homes. I learned a lot about probation, and a lot about finger prints, and that know two finger prints were alike."
- "I think that children and the laws was wonderful. All the kids in my grade really liked it too. I enjoyed going to the court house and making the poster. We had a lot of visitors that talked to us."

Statements like these, compared with the program objectives, indicate that the objectives are being met.

Studies by Lawrence Kohlberg of Harvard University have demonstrated that age 10 to 14 is a critical period in the development of moral and legal understanding, for there is a high correlation between a person's moral views at this age and his views as an adult. If so, there is good reason to believe that *Children and the Law* goes beyond simply meeting its instructional objectives and has brightened the prospects for arresting delinquency rather than delinquents.

ERIC DOCUMENTS

ED 045 528 - Police Youth Protection Unit Programs, San Jose, California: Model Programs. Childhood Education. MF - $.65. Document available from Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Catalog No. HE 5.220:20015I - $.20. This document describes programs of the Youth Protection Unit of the San Jose, California, police department, including a Youth and Law program which has become a standard part of the 7th-grade social studies program in 15 schools.

ED 062 256 - Social Studies: The Law and You. MF - $.65, HC - $3.29. Description of a political studies course for grades seven through nine which emphasizes the relationships between youth and the law, illustrating the way law works in a democracy.

ED 065 394 - You and the Law. Guide for Teaching a Sixteen Class-hour Unit on Citizenship Education. Grade 8. MF - $.65, HC - $3.29. The basic elements of good citizenship, the rights and responsibilities of citizens under the law, and the possible long and short term consequences of violating the law are emphasized in this guide for teaching 14 lessons for 8th grade.

For more information

WRITE:

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READ:

"Law in American Society: Children." *Journal of the National Center for Law-Focused Education.* (May 1975) This special issue of "Law in American Society" presents a rationale for teaching law in elementary schools, classroom strategies and instructional media for teaching law, and a report on evaluation of the effectiveness of law-focused education.

"Teaching About the U.S. Constitution." *Social Education.* (May 1973). In addition to excellent articles on teaching law in the schools, an in-depth listing of instructional sources and resources is included in this issue of *Social Education.*

CURRICULUM MATERIALS:

The following is a selected list of curriculum materials available for teaching about law:

"The Bill of Rights: A Handbook for Teachers"; "The Bill of Rights: A Sourcebook for Teachers"; published by the Constitutional Rights Foundation, California State Department of Education, Sacramento, California.

"Justice and Order Through Law"; "The American Legal System"; developed by the Cornell Law Program and published by Ginn and Company, Lexington, Massachusetts.

"Urban Law High School Civic Problems Series"; "Justice in Urban America Series"; "Trailmarks of Liberty Series"; developed by the Law in American Society Foundation and published by Houghton-Mifflin Company, Boston, Massachusetts.

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